

The Daily Astorian.

ASTORIA, OREGON:

D. C. IRELAND, Editor.

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 1879

Railroad Talk.

There is just at this moment a great deal of railroad talk pertaining to Oregon and Washington territory interests. It all looks hopeful for the development of the interior, with but little for Astoria to expect, however. We presume we must go on hoping, as Astorians have hoped for, the past thirty years.

It is reported in private circles that Mr. Jay Gould has purchased a controlling interest in the Oregon Steamship company, and the Oregon Central, and the Oregon and California railroads. That he is pushing his Utah Northern from Ogden on to the Columbia river as fast as possible; that narrow gauge iron is affixed with which to begin work at some point on the Columbia, and build eastward to intersect the Utah Northern, in the vicinity of the boundary between Oregon and Idaho; that the million dollars raised in New York, is for the Portland, Dalles and Salt Lake railroad, and that the Dalles-Celilo portage will be built at once.

In this connection we are informed that the Walla Walla and Columbia river road will not be extended this year towards Dayton, but will divert from Whitman station in the direction of Grand Bend, via Weston. Work will be commenced on the Northern Pacific also, from the Columbia river eastward, somewhere in the vicinity of the mouth of Snake river.

We are at the same time given to understand that men of wealth in California have taken hold of the Seattle and Walla Walla road, or are about to do so; and that road will be carried on several miles further towards eastern Washington territory. On this side, and further south, the Central Pacific are looking upon Oregon wistfully for a terminus.

Putting all of this and that together as far as poor mortal who have not the handling of the money is able to discern, the dawning of a new era is certainly seen for Oregon. But from an Astoria stand-point we cannot feel that gratification which Portland must feel, as the tendency is to give her at least one, if not more termini, at no very distant day.

The Oregon Central will be completed to Corvallis, as per previous arrangements. Work must also proceed upon the Yaquina bay branch; and should foul weather be selected as the point for the harbor of refuge, we shall see the general government engaged in the construction of an "artificial port," to compete with the Columbia river and Puget sound.

It matters very little to Astoria how many railroads are built; how much the general government may expend in the construction of harbors; how vast population may increase; we still have the noble old Columbia and its tributaries passing our very doors from all points, from remote Lewiston, Colville, etc., as well as the valley of the Wallamet, and "sooner or later,"—very much sooner, we should presume, with all the developments talked of,—a railroad outlet from the interior must seek this city.

Still, in view of all the circumstances surrounding us; this combination of capital and this energy displayed to build up the interior; may we inquire if it is not, at least, time that Astoria take her light from under the bushel, where it has been hidden all these years; and let it so shine that all may see the advantages which we have to offer as an inducement for the investment of capital in our midst? Is it not time that Astoria publish to the world some of the pages written in behalf of her interests, and by concerted action on the part of this public lay open a full and convincing statement before men who control the means to relieve us? This part of Oregon and Washington is an Empire in all the natural resources that produce wealth. We need population to develop it; we need capital. Population and capital seek investment alike upon the basis of information furnished. That information is all the capital we have at our disposal,—let us use it. "Westward the star of empire" has been marching, until Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and Utah, now furnish the supplies to keep up the rank and file. Idaho, Oregon and Washington are this year feeling more sensibly the push of that grand army, but the coast counties are not receiving their percentage. Shall we wait until history repeats itself for a benefit, or shall Astoria and Clatsop county, join with Pacific, Tillamook, etc., to make the effort now? With development of the interior, as forecast by the present movements, the steamship passenger trade will be so far diminished as to render it certain that but few people will travel this way seeking homes. They will come in by rail from the other side—it will then be seen that Astoria neglected its golden opportunity, and we will still be found wondering, waiting for a revival of trade; an example of hopes deferred.

A Shameful Libel

In his day and generation George D. Prentice, of the Louisville Journal, was noted among the leading editors of the United States. He could write sustained articles of great power, and occupied a respectable position as a poet, but was better known as a satirist, unsparing in his lampoon on those who incurred his displeasure, and witty to a remarkable degree in his terse and epigrammatic comments upon current events. During the exciting times leading up to the war of the rebellion Mr. Prentice remained a staunch friend of the Union. He exerted great influence with his paper in preventing the withdrawal of Kentucky from the family of states (more influence, perhaps, than any other one man in Kentucky), on which account it was very desirable by secessionists that he should be won over to their way of thinking. As southern feeling became intensified, however, Mr. Prentice was overslaughed. Some person, raking among the reminiscences of the past, affects to have discovered that Mr. Prentice accepted a bribe of \$25,000 to advocate the secession cause. Two or three names are used to endorse the rumor, which the surviving friends of Mr. Prentice pronounce a shameful libel.

The previous life of Mr. Prentice had been above all suspicion as a bribe-taker, in his editorial or any other capacity, and it is with no small amount of indignation that his admirers find there is occasion when it becomes necessary for them to defend his good name. The issue has, however, been forced before the public, and like all scandals involving the reputation of public men, has become a topic of animated discussion throughout the breadth of the land. All fair minds will admit that there is more pleasure in establishing than tearing a reputation to pieces, for which reason, having a kindly remembrance for Mr. Prentice, and his brilliant journalistic labors, we bring forward a scrap of vindictory testimony which seems to be worthy of some respect. Col. J. Stoddard Johnson, secretary of state of Kentucky, writes a lengthy letter, in which he admits that Mr. Prentice was offered \$25,000 by G. W. Johnson, if he would go over to the confederate side. Mr. Prentice discussed the secession subject in all its bearings, but could not be moved from his union sentiments. Soon afterward he made the following declaration:

If at any future time I conclude that there is no earthly chance of the south's coming back in war, I shall advocate the recognition of southern independence; but in doing this I shall feel little else than despair for what I have ever regarded as the most blessed country on earth.

Mr. Johnson realized that Prentice was firm in his convictions, and says, "rebel as I was, I write this letter in his defense." It cannot be seen, even if Mr. Prentice had been bought, which we do not believe, what good can be subserved by bringing the matter before the public at this late day.

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